

## The Trip to the West Reserve in the 1870s

by Hans Werner

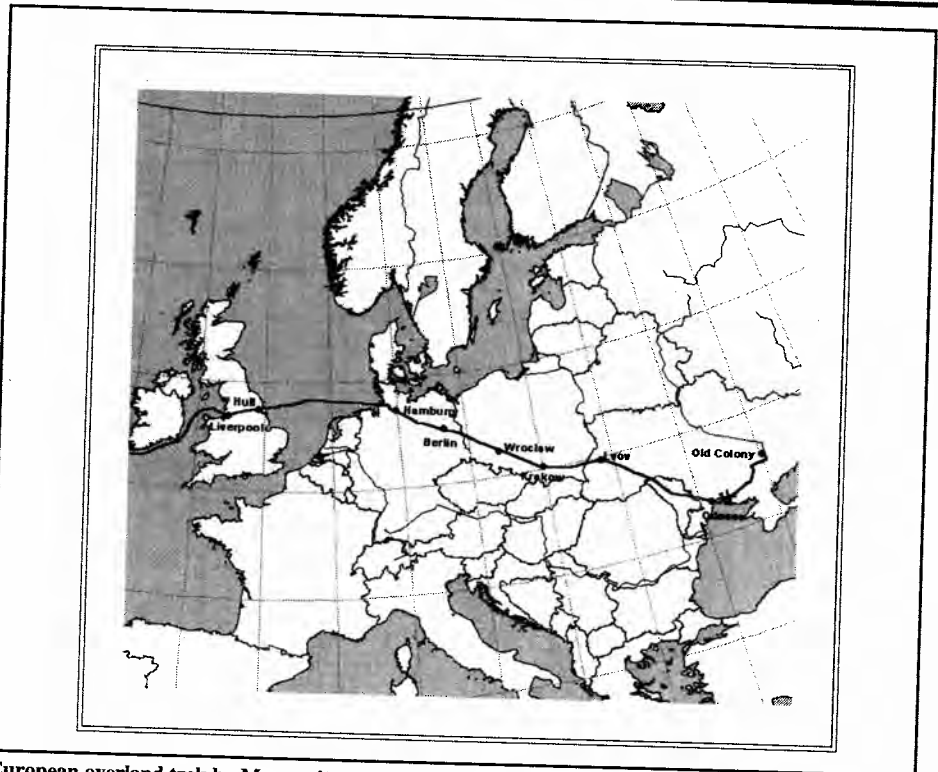
It must have been quite an experience, especially for children and young adults, to make the journey from the familiar villages of Russia to the plains of Canada. For Old Colony and Fürstenland migrants, the trip began with the painful parting on the banks of the Dnieper where there was a "leave-taking with no hope of again seeing each other." Jacob Fehr, a sixteen year-old at the time recalled the "crying and weeping" that accompanied the final whistle that signalled the start of the journey down the Dnieper by boat to its mouth at Kherson. Here the migrants transferred to a larger boat for the trip on the Black Sea to the city of Odessa where the journey continued across Europe by train.

The train trip across Europe to Hamburg gave the migrants the first glimpses of cities like they had never seen. Although the port of Bremen was the point of departure for most nineteenth century immigrants travelling to North America, the Canadian government had arranged for transportation for Russian Mennonites from Hamburg. Young Jacob Fehr could not remember how long the trip across the North Sea to Hull took but he remembered, "that we were heavily struck with seasickness." They travelled across England to Liverpool by train where they then boarded the ship that would take them to Canada.

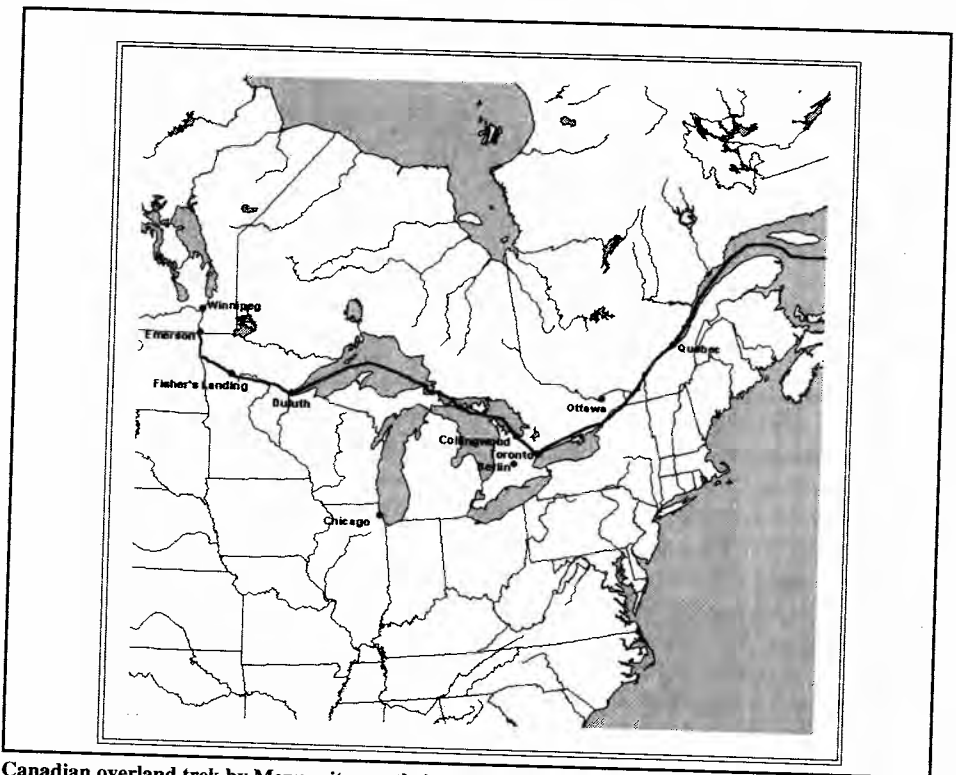
The ocean trip took about eight days and at Quebec they disembarked and set off by train for Toronto. A stop at the Ontario Mennonites was often in store before taking the train to Collingwood where they boarded a steamer that took them across the Great Lakes to Duluth.

Jacob Fehr reported that the train that took them from Duluth stopped at a place called Fisher's Landing—likely present day Fisher, Minnesota, where Kansas Mennonites tried to dissuade them from continuing to Manitoba. The Red River steamer took the migrants to the immigration sheds at Dufferin before the settlers made their way to the Big Plain that would become their West Reserve home.

Although very different from the routine of peasant farm life, some of the rhythm of life continued unabated. A woman died giving birth while the ship waited to dock in Hull and babies were born and people died while at sea. Ultimately the families reached their allocated place in a West Reserve village to reconstruct family, community and church life.



European overland trek by Mennonites on their way to North America. (Map supplied by the author)



Canadian overland trek by Mennonites on their way to Manitoba. (Map supplied by the author)

## Reinländer Ältester Johann Wiebe, 1837-1906 (Part 2)

by Peter D. Zacharias

People came from far and wide on horse-drawn vehicles and on foot. The Ältesters, the ministers, the deacons, and the Vorsänger gathered at the door. The Vorsänger announced the hymn: *Walt's Gott in Jesu Christi Namen* (Gesangbuch, #89). As the singing of the third verse began, the Ältester opened the door of the thatched roof pioneer meeting house and entered. He was followed by the aged Jacob Wiens, born in Prussia, Gerhard Paetkau, Abraham Wiebe, the Ältester's brother, Johann Friesen of Neuenburg, Cornelius Peters, and the deacons, Peter Klassen and Johann Enns.

As the singing continued the whole congregation filed into the church. Ältester Wiebe preached the dedicating message; he spoke the blessing. The feeling of gratitude that prevailed was genuine.

But as time went on, problems could not be avoided. The church and its Ältester were challenged on several fronts. One major conflict swirled around the issue of hymn tunes. Some in the congregation wanted to return to the use of the old tunes used in Russia, some not familiar in the congregation. Oral tradition indicates that Johann Wiebe did not want to return to the old hymn tunes, but was under pressure to do so. However, many in the congregation were already used to the choral tunes of Heinrich Franz before coming to Canada.<sup>7</sup>

So two seemingly intransigent positions became a deeply divisive issue. Another tough issue was the application of the ban. Should the ban be used sparsely in cases of severe infractions? Should the ban be used to enforce social control as it related, for example, to the maintenance of the village settlement pattern?

The Brotherhood meeting (*Bruderschaft*) of 5 October 1880 left the West Reserve more deeply divided. It hurt Ältester Johann Wiebe to see this disintegration. His vision was, after all, one church, one colony, and one colony administration, based on the village settlement pattern.

The vision was further threatened by the influx of a large Bergthaler group from the East Reserve which had begun to come to the West Reserve in search of better land. Their worship and community ways now provided an alternative pattern, thus aggravating these growing divisions within Ältester Wiebe's own congregation.<sup>8</sup>

We may question the social control exercised by the Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde. But consider Ältester Wiebe's concerns form his own vantage point. Was it not a most egalitarian concept? Belonging to the congregation meant living in the village. It meant sharing the good land, sharing the poor land, sharing in the community pasture. It meant no more big private estates (*chutors*). It meant taking seriously the word of the prophet: Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land. (Isaiah 5:8 NIV).

We may question the Reinländer, and Johann Wiebe's, attitude to schools, and their resistance to the anglicization and secularization of the school system. But can we also see the integrity of Ältester Wiebe's position? The education of Mennonite children throughout the centuries of Anabaptist educational history had never been the business of the government. This was the responsibility and prerogative of the parents and the community of faith. Their church school was designed to reinforce the values of the society and milieu in which the children of the church community were living. It was set up to prepare young people to live healthy, productive, socially well-adjusted lives within that society. It sought to plant the roots of faith in firm soil, and, one could say, was successful by its own standards.

Johann Wiebe lived to see the school controversy begin in earnest in the West Reserve. He lived to see the payment of the *Brotschuld*, a \$100,000 government settlement loan to early settlers, and later wrote a letter of thanks to the government.<sup>9</sup>

Ältester Wiebe saw land getting scarce so that young couples could no longer get 160 acres each. The land in the West Reserve had all been claimed and so he also witnessed the beginning of Mennonite settlement in Saskatchewan. His son Abraham became an Ältester at Swift Current; his son Peter would become one in Manitoba. It was the Saskatchewan Ältester

Jacob Wiens who officiated at Johann's funeral service in the village of Reinland.<sup>10</sup>

I want to close with a letter of condolence, a short letter that was sent to Jacob Wiebe, Ältester Johann Wiebe's son, in Rosengart, by William Hespeler:

"With sadness of heart I receive the painful news that your father who was so close to me has gone to his Creator. Please accept my deepest sympathy and also express my condolences to the church he left behind on its irreplaceable loss. He was a faithful shepherd and spent his energy, indeed, his whole life, for the welfare of this flock and as its example. I will always remember him as a personal friend and as the father of the Reinländer Mennonite Church. I also express my sympathy to his own family and to those who lent assistance and support in his good works and I hope that his good spirit will remain an example to them."<sup>11</sup>

That was certainly the sentiment of many, many people who had known Ältester Wiebe within his congregation and outside of it as well.

### Endnotes for Part 1

1. For Wiebe family ties with Ältester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) of the Bergthaler Gemeinde and Ältester Heinrich Enns of the

(cont. on p.4)

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The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter, *Heritage Posting*, welcomes letters and reports pertaining to the historical interests of society members. Correspondence can be mailed to Bert Friesen, 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 2E5, or e-mailed to the editor at editor@mmhs.org

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## Fort Dufferin, The Fortyninth, and the West Reserve 1875

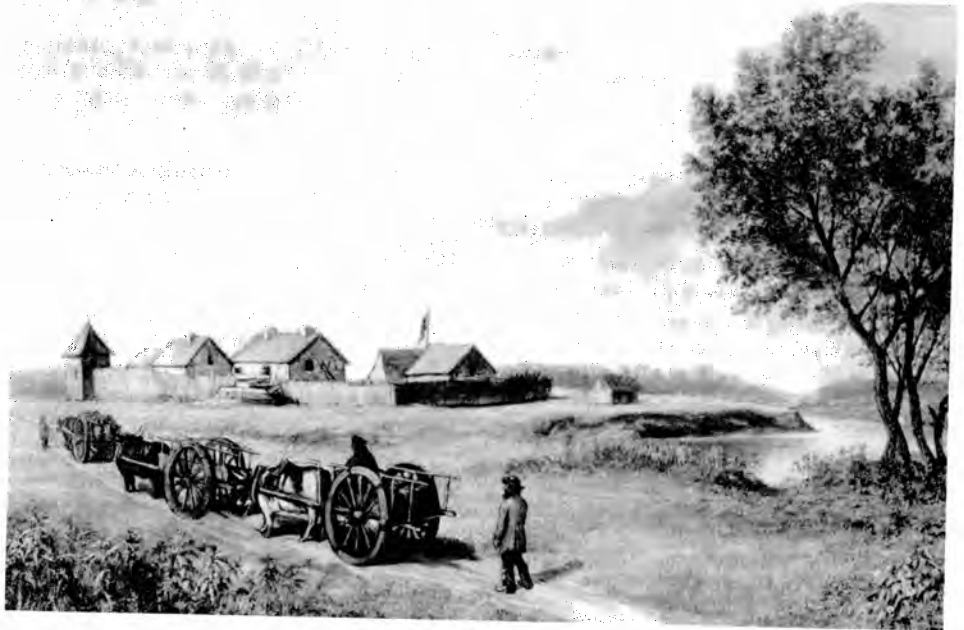
by Edwin D. Hoepfner

"I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.

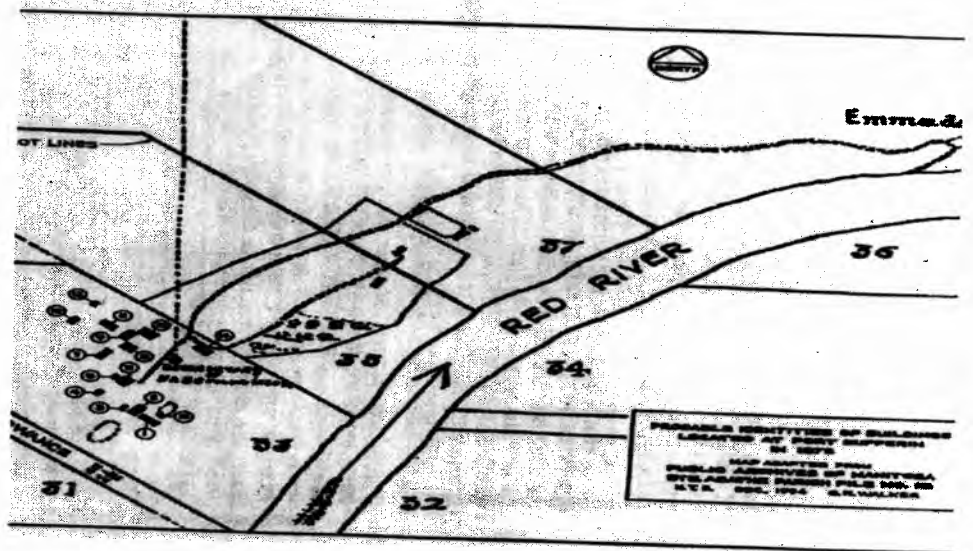
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He only says, Good fences make good neighbors.

(From "Mending Wall," by Robert Frost,  
1914)

When the first Mennonite immigrants bound for the "Big Plain" west of Red River on the "International" were approaching the International Boundary, they passed the mouth of the Pembina River, site of a number of Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), Northwest Company (NWC) and XY Company (XYC) fur trading posts. The first of these appears to have been built in about 1793 by Peter Grant (NWC). A few years later, Alexander Henry (the Younger) built a NWC fort on the northwest angle of the confluence in 1801 and rebuilt it in 1803.<sup>1</sup> Later still, the Selkirk Settlers over-wintered at Pembina in Fort Daer, built by the HBC in 1811. Henry's Fort Pembina and Fort Daer both were still in existence in the 1820s and we are fortunate to have a watercolour of the two forts, in about 1822, done by the Swiss Selkirk Settler artist, Peter Rindisbacher. In about 1826 Rindisbacher and many of the Swiss emigrated to St Paul, Minnesota, after experiencing disastrous grasshoppers and the great flood of 1826. Immediately after crossing the boundary, the passengers of the "International" would have seen on the east bank of the Red the nascent village/town of Emerson, which had only just come into existence the previous year (1874) and was beginning to grow somewhat in 1875<sup>2</sup>. On the west bank of the Red there still stood the HBC Fort North Pembina - painted by the American artist, Washington Frank Lynn, who passed through this area in 1872 on his way to Red River (Winnipeg); the painting depicts the fort much as it must have looked in 1875., It was "...torn down in 1880 and replaced with a fine, new store."<sup>2</sup> In the vicinity of the HBC Fort, probably to the south, stood a log building, the Canadian Customs House, opened in late



Fort Pembina, c.1875. Oil painting by Washington Frank Lynn. Reproduction from Hudson Bay Company Archives. Credit: Hudson Bay Company Collection



Map of Fort Dufferin, adapted from a map held by the Public Archives Manitoba by John McFarland & Associates and Post Road Heritage Group.

1871. By 1872 the Customs House also served as a Telegraph, Express, and Post Office - and it is likely also where the first Mennonite births on the West Reserve were registered. This area of the HBC Fort and the Customs House were initially known as North Pembina and a little later was known as "West Lynne." "The Emerson Centennial History" does not indicate the origin of the name "West Lynne," but one guess is that it might have some connection with "East Lynne, a novel (1861) by Mrs Henry Wood (1814-1887), which centred on a railway accident and which became the most popular Victorian stage melodrama.

(cont. on p.7)

## Endnotes

(cont. from p.2)

Kleingemeinde in south Russia, cf. Henry Schapansky, "The Bergthaler Wiebes," *Preservings* No.13 (December, 1998), 60 ff., and Delbert F. Plett, "The Family of Ältester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905)", *Preservings* No.14 (June, 1999), 7-8. Note: Wiebe's death year was actually 1906. The complete text of the Zacharias paper on Johann Wiebe was published in *Preservings* No.14 (June, 1999), 3-6.

2. On Fürstenland beginnings cf. C. Krahn, "Russia," *Menmonite Encyclopedia Vol.IV* (Scottsdale, PA, Newton, KS, and Hillsboro, KS, 1959), 381 ff. Abraham Wiebe's story is told in John Wall, et al, eds. and compilers. *The Descendants of Ohm Abraham Wiebe 1831-1990* (Winkler, MB, 1991).

3. The sermon was published in Johann Wiebe. *Die Auswanderung von Russland Nach Kanada, 1875* (Cuauhtemoc, Chih., Mexico, 1972). There have been reprints after this.

4. The story of working out alternatives to military service in Russia is told in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church State Relations, 1789-1936", unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984.

5. The views of those who favoured alternative service instead of emigrating are illustrated in Leonard Gross, trans. and ed., "The Coming of the Russian Mennonites to America: An Analysis of Johann Epp, Mennonite Minister in Russia, 1875", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LVIII (October, 1974), 460-475.

6. The feelings of Wiebe and others travelling at this time may be reflected in the diary of Jacob Fehr as quoted in Peter D. Zacharias. *Reinland. An Experience in Community* (Reinland, MB: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976), 33ff.

## Endnotes for Part 2

7. Some issues related to the Russian Mennonite singing tradition are discussed in Wesley Berg. *From Russia With Music: A Study of the Mennonite Choral Singing Tradition in Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1985), 13-40.

8. On the Bergthaler move to the former West Reserve cf. Henry J. Gerbrandt. *Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba* (Altona, MB: The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1972), 69-76.

9. On the *Brottschuld* cf. E.K. Francis. *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen and Sons, 1955), 58ff.

10. On the story of the Reinländer move from Manitoba to Saskatchewan late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cf. Frank H. Epp. *Mennonites in Canada 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1974), 303ff.

11. A copy of the letter is in the author's personal files.

## Higher Education as I Experienced It

by John C. Reimer

*This is the third of three articles published from materials in the John C. Reimer personal papers. Mr. Reimer passed away in 1990. His papers were shared with HP by son Arnold, who is doing research on a biography of his father. The comments come from an interview given by John to David K. Schellenberg at a 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Kleingemeinde held in Steinbach in 1987. David had asked: In a time when higher education was frowned on, how did you manage to go to school to get this higher education?*

I grew up on a farm until I was the age of 21, which was the legal age to go on one's own at the time. I had not learned a trade so when I began to work for myself, I helped in my uncle's store as clerk. But I planned to be a school teacher.

All the education we had was from a private school, and a number of evening classes in the Steinbach high school. In the private school we got as far as decimals in arithmetic. We had a text for geography, and a grammar for the German language. We read from an English reader, and translated from English into German and German into English. However, we never spoke the language.

After about a year in the store, I got a position as school teacher in the Blumenhof school. I was there for two years and then became a teacher in the Steinbach (private) school. That was the last year of the private school in Steinbach (i.e. around 1920 - ed.). As it turned out the second teacher in the school could not stay for the whole term, so I took over. That is how I came to be the last teacher in the private school. As far as I know I am the only teacher still living in both East and West Reserve, who taught in a private school.

When the government took over the schools, the public was divided: one group favoured the new public schools, and the other preferred the private school. The groups objected to each other to quite an extent sometimes. I could tell many stories about that, but we don't have the time.

The Department (of Education) did not have enough teachers to supply the schools, so they hired students from the high school and gave them permits to teach. The Department preferred these students who had been teachers in the private school because they had experience in teaching.

We students organized our own summer schools to improve our education. We went to the Department, hired a professor, and paid him and did it all by ourselves. Most of the summer schools were in the educational Institute near Altona (Mennonite Educational Institute in Altona (?) - ed.). One year it was in Steinbach and one year I took a course at the University of Manitoba.

I was married at twenty-five and got all my high school education after that. Up to then the Department accepted Grade 11s into the Normal School, or Teacher's College, as it is now. But the plans were to make it Grade 12 that they would accept, so I took Grade 12. In that case the church saw that higher education would be necessary if they wanted to have teachers from their own group. But it was a hard problem for them to change their minds.

I saw the need in the church, and still wanted to become a teacher. But I knew that they saw a danger in higher education and objected to it. I felt I had to tell the authorities of the church of my plans, so one Sunday morning I went into the church office where the teachers (ministers? - ed.), were sitting before the service began, and told them about my plan. I heard no reply and did not expect one either. So the church saw that if they wanted to have teachers from their own church, they would have to change to higher education and they did.

What a change it was! At first our forefathers saw a danger in higher education and objected to it. Now we encourage higher education and go on and on. We, the church, raise our graduates above all the others and give them a special supper. What is our aim in that?

## MMHS News & Notes

### Mennonite Historical Society of Canada Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, on 4 December 1999.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) has become a multi-faceted organization. It was founded over thirty years ago to publish the history of the Mennonites in Canada. The result is the three-volume series. The last was published in 1996.

Since then, the MHSC has explored many ideas. The first to come to fruition was the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online project. This began with a two-fold purpose: i) to enlarge on the Canadian content of the Mennonite Encyclopedia (ME), Vol.1-V ii) to make accessible the database of material accumulated during the research for the publication of the three volume Mennonites in Canada series. Both purposes are now underway. The relevant Canadian content material from ME is now being put online and enlarged. The database material was mostly congregational profiles and these have also been put online. Plans are being formulated to put up new material. The process is being finalized and soon a call will go out for writers. The site URL is [www.mhsc.ca](http://www.mhsc.ca)

Secondly, it was decided to rewrite the three volume series into one volume. This would be in a format that would appeal to the general reader and could also be used as a text, especially at the high school and possibly undergraduate level. Also, a pictorial history is envisioned in the future. So many photographs, which were not able to be included in the three volume series, should somehow be made accessible. This project will only start after the one volume work is completed.

Thirdly, the Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites History Project (DVCM) has begun. The proposal is to have four projects. The first is to publish a work on the history of Mennonite women in Canada. The

second is to have a symposium and then publish a book on the coming, settlement, work patterns, and faith activity of German-speaking Latin American Mennonite immigrants in Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta. The third is to have a symposium and then publish a book on the history of Asian and African refugees who were assisted by Mennonites families between 1960 and 2000. Fourthly, a conference is planned for the autumn of 2000 on the relationship of Aboriginal communities and Mennonite mission, church, and social-concerns agencies and then to publish the proceedings of this conference. A major source of funds of this endeavour is Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

Some other conferences were highlighted. The 1874 Revisited conference discussed the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites to Manitoba, in Winnipeg at the beginning of October this year. The Khortitsa '99 conference in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine was reported to be a big first for Mennonites in the former Soviet Union. Another conference is being planned in Ontario in the late autumn/early winter of 2000 on the history of the Mennonites in Ontario.

So, from a one project organization, the MHSC has truly become multi-project organization.

### 125th anniversary celebrations continue on West Reserve

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society held its annual meeting 29 Jan.2000 after a year which marked the 125th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of Mennonites to Manitoba, and the beginning of the 125th anniversary celebration of the settlement of Mennonites on the Manitoba West Reserve, west of the Red River.

Meeting at Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach Jan. 29. Outgoing president Adolf Ens reflected on the Mennonite emigrations of the 1870s, the 1920s, and the 1940s. "Even for the historical society, it has meaning for us today. Let's commit ourselves to another year of working together," he urged. The executive report touched on celebrations held and planned for 2000, memorials and publications, other initiatives, active committee work, and a need to recruit others to membership.

Membership and publicity committee chair Ed D. Hoepfner reported the resignation of long-time member and newsletter co-editor Lawrence Klippenstein, that Bert Friesen will be the general editor of *Heritage Postings* in 2000, and the launching of a membership drive, with a video inducement, a new brochure, and a mailing to churches.

The local history committee report, prepared by Otto Hamm, noted the death of long-time active members John Dyck and Bill Harms, reported on a spring workshop in Gretna, and an October meeting in Winkler with representatives of surrounding communities to discuss West Reserve 125th anniversary plans for 2000.

From genealogy Alf Redekopp reported progress in preparing for publication the first volume of the Russian Mennonite Genealogy Series. In a joint effort with the Alberta Mennonite Historical Society, a database may be created from genealogical information from Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization papers.

Lawrence Klippenstein, historical sites and monuments committee, reported on Conrad Stoesz's research, and publication of a short series on the Post Road in newspapers, exhibits at Emerson in connection with March West, a larger public exhibit in the Morden Gallery, and a possible Fort Dufferin landing re-enactment in July, 2000.

A West Reserve 125th anniversary celebration update says Gerhard Ens is providing a series of W.R. history sketches on his Low German program on CFAM/CHSM Wed. at 9.30 p.m. and the Altona EMM congregation is preparing a 50th anniversary book

The main activity of research, scholarship, and publications committee, reported Hans Werner, was the evaluation of potential manuscripts received, and the initiation of a project to publish a history of the Mennonite experience in Manitoba. The project's concept has been discussed with a potential author, and donations to a fund are encouraged.



## 125<sup>th</sup> Manitoba Mennonite Anniversary

### Celebration Plans

- Jacob H. Dyck Family Reunion at Altona Centennial Park in 2000. Contacts: Art K. Dyck, chair; Melvin Klassen, secretary - both Altona.
- Hoepfner, Bergen, Wiebe and Dyck families are making reunion plans for the summer at Steinbach, Gretna, Otterburne and Altona respectively.
- Manitoba Sunflower Festival in Altona July 28 - 30<sup>th</sup>. They have already arranged with local people for opening of the AltBergthal School for the day. The heritage demonstration includes threshing, but also cutting, and a woodwork - pre power tools - demonstration, and much more. The heritage event is set for four hours Sat. afternoon, following the forenoon parade.

### 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

(cont. from p.5)

Treasurer Bert Friesen presented the financial report for the year showing operations with revenues of \$12,985 and expenditures of \$14,165 and so a small \$1,180 operations loss, a balance sheet with assets of \$51,600 and a preliminary budget for 2000, to be approved by the newly elected Board.

George Klassen, of Carman, attended to introduce briefly a proposal to restore a



Playwright Wilmer Penner addressing the annual meeting of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society in Steinbach recently. Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs



Men's Quarters at Fort Dufferin, 1872-1874. Credit: Provincial Archives Manitoba

Mennonite village similar to Neuberghal or Reinland, over 10-15 years with 15-30 residences, most of the house-barn combination. He says he sees a village of newer and older homes, with at least one restored to as close to an "original condition" as possible.

Guest speaker Wilmer Penner addressing the amateur historians encouraging them saying "somewhere you'll find that historical item." Many books have been published on the East Reserve, with anecdotal historians like Roy Vogt, compilers like John Dyck, and historians like Delbert Plett, who works with a grand vision.

Examining a pile of books before him, the playwright said "my scripts come from these books, from experiences found here, and perhaps telling why they did what they did. Our descendants will write and tell their own story. A close relationship between history, drama and sources goes into the making of a script," he said.

In a board reorganization meeting, Alf Redekop was elected president, and Abe Dueck retained the vice-presidency. Ken Reddig continues as secretary, Bert Friesen as treasurer, and Irene Kroeker as member-at-large. This Executive Committee serves as the Finance Committee.

Newly elected to the board were Esther Epp-Tiessen, researcher-writer, and Paul Friesen, librarian, both from Winnipeg. Returned for new two-year terms were Ed Hoepfner, Jake Peters, Hans Werner, all from Winnipeg, Otto Hamm, Morden, and Irene Kroeker, Steinbach.

*Elmer Heinrichs*

#### Committee Memberships

Local History: Otto Hamm (chair), Adolf Ens, Bruce Wiebe, Ed Falk, Mary Ellen Neufeld, David M. Friesen, Jake E. Peters, and John Wall.

Historic Sites and Monuments: Henry Ens (chair), Martha Martens, Dolores Harder, Lawrence Klippenstein, Ed Hoepfner, and Ray Klippenstein.

Research, Scholarship, and Publications: Hans Werner (chair), Jacob Peters, Abe Dueck, Esther Epp-Tiessen, Irene Kroeker, and Paul Friesen.

Membership & Publicity: Ed Hoepfner (chair), Irene Kroeker, Elmer Heinrichs. Bert Friesen, treasurer, sits on this committee as an ex-officio member.

Genealogy: Bert Friesen (chair), Richard Thiessen, Marianne Janzen, Conrad Stoesz, and Alf Redekopp.

125<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary: Conrad Stoesz (chair), Adolf Ens, Ken Reddig, Lawrence Klippenstein, and Irene Kroeker.

## Fort Dufferin

(cont. from p.3)

The Manitoba Daily Free Press (MDFP) reported the arrival of these immigrant Mennonites at West Lynne and at the Rat River in July, 1875. Fifty-three families landed at Fort Dufferin and forty families at the Rat River.

In the book "Reinland: An Experience in Community," Peter D. Zacharias has included an account of Jacob Fehr's memory of the arrival at Dufferin. Jacob Fehr (1859 - 1952) was sixteen years old at the time. "...It seems to me that there were three buildings arranged in a triangle. Our party occupied these quarters quite fully. There was little elbow room. There were many sick children who had not recovered from sea-sickness and one after the other they passed into eternity. There was a funeral every day ..."<sup>3</sup> There is still a memory in the Emerson area of a series of shallow depressions south of Dufferin, which were believed to be the site of these graves.<sup>4</sup> The area has since been cultivated and the depressions are apparently obliterated.

Until relatively recently no plan or map of Fort Dufferin was known but John McFarland and Associates located a plan in the Ste. Agathe Parish File No. 15, held in the Public Archives of Manitoba (PAM)<sup>5</sup> and both Mr Dick Remus of the Post Road Heritage Group and Mr McFarland have graciously given the MMHS permission to publish their adaptation of this map in this article (see p.3). Although the map may not be entirely accurate with respect to relative distances between buildings, it is interesting to note that the three barracks buildings (at 8, 9 and 10) are arranged in the form of a "U" with the opening of the "U" oriented toward the southeast and facing the river. It would appear that these are the three buildings "in a triangle" recalled many years later by Mr Jacob Fehr, and one of our photographs shows us what they looked like in the 1873 - 1875 period. As related by Mr Fehr, their party - likely the first one - had to stay in these overcrowded quarters for some six weeks until the land survey was completed and the new homesteaders could claim lands on what became the West Reserve. But why the delay in the survey? The sectional and quarter-section survey was only commenced in 1875 ... and thanks to a letter to the Editor of the MDFP, in the edition of June 24, 1875, we know that this sectional survey apparently did not get underway until at least the latter part of June 1875. By July 29, 1875 the MDFP was able to report that settlement preparation was underway.

By August 6, 1875 the MDFP reported that Mr Shantz was putting up two buildings at Emerson in which to store supplies for the Mennonites, and corrected the Reserve size to 18 townships. Each building was reported to be 18 x 80 feet in size and they were conveniently located near the steamboat landing and the ferry.

Then in its issue of August 19, 1875 the MDFP reported that Mr Shantz had indicated that "the immigration for this season is over." About 808 families, averaging 5½ persons to a family for a total of 4444 persons had come in 1874 and 1875 with about one third of this number arriving in 1874 and of these about 30 families had gone to the Scratching River in Township 5, Range 1E. Also 80 families were still in Ontario and would come in 1876. In this report Shantz referred to the "Rat River Reserve" and the "Pembina Reserve," with about 300 families on the latter.

The same issue, in an item from Emerson dated August 16th, 1875, reported that Mr Ashdown had brought in a barge load of goods for his trade with the Mennonites but that "Pembina has been getting a good deal of the Russian trade on account of the scarcity of goods on this side of the boundary line."

On 26 August 26, 1875 the MDFP reported: "A portion of the freight of the Selkirk consisted in wagons, all the way from Russia, for the Mennonites. They are very substantial; but there are at least two things the matter with them: they have small wheels, which don't do for our mud, and the freight upon them amounts to as much as would buy good wagons here." On 28 August 1875 the MDFP reported: "Thornton & Sutherland have received an order from Mr. Shantz for 5000 sacks of flour and 4000 bushels of grain for the Mennonites, to be delivered before the close of navigation."

## Endnotes

1. New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest - The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry ..... 1799 - 1814 (Edited with copious critical commentary by Elliott Coues, Vol I The Red River of the North) (1897, Reprinted 1965, Ross & Haines, Inc, Minneapolis, Minn). See also Chas. H. Lee; The Long Ago (1899 The Semi-Weekly Mountaineer Press, Walhalla, N.D.)
2. Emerson 1875 - 1975 A Centennial History (Emerson Chamber of Commerce, D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd, Altona, Man).
3. P.D. Zacharias; Reinland an Experience in Community (Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976, D.W.



"Selkirk", the first boat of the 1873 season at Fort Dufferin. Credit: Prov. Archives of MB

Friesen & Sons Ltd, Altona, Man).

4. Telephone conversation Mr Dick Remus, of the Post Road Heritage Group, Emerson, with the author 10 February 2000.

5. Fort Dufferin Feasibility Study - Prepared for The Post Road Heritage Group, Inc. (by McFarland and Associates, March 1995).

(to be concluded)

## Choices

Mennonites of Manitoba are celebrating their 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of coming to this province. They are definite that it is the correct number of years they have been here. At the same time the world is celebrating of the end of the millennium and the beginning of another. However, here there is not the same certainty about when to celebrate this anniversary. There has often been this ambiguity about the beginning and the end of a century and millennium. They include 100 years and 1000 years. There are two choices:

- a. The beginning year is year zero and the end would therefore be year ninety-nine or nine hundred ninety-nine. There has always been some difficulty in defining year zero.
- b. The beginning year is year one and the end would therefore be year one hundred or one thousand.

If one chooses a. then the century and millennium would end at the end of this past year. If one chooses b. then the century and millennium would end on 31 December 2000. Which would you choose? Send your replies to the editor.

## Book Reviews

Jewish Mennonite Ukrainian Committee. *A Sharing of Diversities: Proceedings of the Jewish Mennonite Ukrainian Conference, "Building Bridges"*. (University of Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1999) sc., 264 pp., \$19.95.

*Reviewed by Helene Friesen, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.*

This volume is a collection of 19 papers selected from the ones presented by participants at the August 1995 tri-ethnic conference held at St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba. Organized by a committee consisting of members of the Jewish, Ukrainian and Mennonite communities in Canada in order to promote a more comprehensive perception of each other, the conference began with a sense of anticipation. When it ended three days later, a broad spectrum of topics and perspectives had been covered, and as broad a range of reactions and responses had been rendered.

Once inhabitants of neighbouring villages on the steppes of the Russian Empire, now neighbours on the prairies and in the suburbs of Canada, the three ethnic groups have in common their past experiences of suffering, marginalization and statelessness. But is this common experience enough to unite the three, or to enhance mutual empathy?

Bridges are built to span rivers and chasms in order to advance transit. In their moving toward finding a common ground, did presenters and audience succeed in the construction project at hand? Were bridges built?

The answer may depend upon the balancing of expectations of all participants with the intentional or unintentional level of controversy engendered by the topics themselves. That some papers contained controversial material and positions is undeniable, as is the possibility that certain topics may have created discomfort for some listeners.

Among the papers are several that ventured to strive to overcome the silence on the possibly most contentious topic, that of anti-Semitism. Harry Loewen addresses the associations between Mennonites and National Socialism and their approach toward Jews, 1933 to 1945. Sol Littman handles the sometimes antagonistic interaction between Jews and Ukrainians in Canada. Lionel Steiman's paper debates whether anti-Semitism was and is a Canadian tradition.

When reading Jars Balan's paper on Nestor Makhno as presented to readers of a Ukrainian paper in Canada in 1918 to 1920, try to imagine the thoughts and reactions of Mennonites in the audience, descendants of 1920s immigrants from Soviet Russia.

Discourse on the social and cultural aspects was also included. Gerald Romsa examines the attempts of Canadian Ukrainians and Jews to overcome the gap of understanding between the two. Nick Mitchell looks at the shared mythology of all three groups: exile. Ben-Z. Shek's paper illustrates how all three groups were portrayed in the writings of Gabrielle Roy. Women's history as such remains represented by Lisa Singer revealing the unrecognized contributions of Jewish women pioneers, 1880 to 1920. If similar treatment of women's history within the other groups had been included in the conference, comparisons could have been made instead of being merely speculated upon.

What so adroitly tied the conference together when it finally concluded, was the summary given by Fred Stambrook, a member of the conference planning committee and the general editor of this volume. Here, his Introduction does more than recap the papers: by taking on a broad overview of the papers presented, the prologue points out and analyzes many pertinent points of conjunction as well as disjunction in the parallel experiences over the histories of the three ethnic groups. His statement, "Let each group be honest about its past" (xiii) may well be the chosen motif for the dialogue to continue.

Readers may consider *A Sharing of Diversities* itself to be the bridge between the three groups, crossing the perceived divide that distinguishes each of them. Along with the conference, at the very least this volume can be construed as one of the solid spans upon which construction can continue.

## Book Notes

- George and Dorothy Unger of Goshen Indiana have published *The Family of 3.8 Jacob Stoesz and Anna Wiebe: 1834-1996*. This 209 page book is the third Stoesz genealogy book. This book focuses on the genealogical data of this extended family which have dispersed from Canada to the USA and Mexico. Books can be ordered from George and Betty Kehler, Box 2701, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, (204) 326-6791.

- The descendants of Jacob Dyck (1924-1999) have published his memoirs and a genealogy register compiled by Jacob Dyck in celebration of Jacob Dyck and Margarete Neufeld's 50th wedding anniversary in September of 1999. This 82 page book attempts to tell the stories of Jacob Dyck's life in Communist Russia, immigration to and life in Canada, in a way that makes "... the book interesting for grandchildren to read". Books can be ordered from Bruno Dyck (204) 474-8184.

- *Hot off the press* is Victor Doerksen's translation of Gerhard Lohrenz's book *Zagradovka*. This book was originally published in the Echo Verlag Series in 1947. This expanded version documents the *Zagradovka* settlement in southern Russia where Lohrenz grew up and "...witnessed murder and mayhem...". This book retails for \$10.00 and the whole set of eight books for \$88.00, however, members of the historical society can receive a 10% discount on books bought through the society.



Book launch of *Zagradovka* (L-R) Gerhard Ens, Victor Doerksen, Sophie Hein (Daughter of Gerhard Lohrenz), and Adolf Ens of CMBC Publications. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.